

CLAIMS:

1. A method for augmenting the information content of electronic messages between parties trading in financial instruments, wherein the electronic messages have display formats and sizes limited by industry protocol, the method comprising:

receiving an electronic message from a sender party;

transmitting the electronic message to a recipient party for fixed format display;

embedding an activation link in the displayed message, wherein the link leads to an information augmentation; and

providing information augmentation in response to the recipient party's activation of the link.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein receiving an electronic message from a sender party comprises receiving an indication of interest message for trading financial instruments.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein receiving and transmitting the electronic messages comprise displaying the messages on web pages accessible to the parties.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein transmitting messages further comprises adding time stamps and sender identification to the received messages.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein embedding an activation link comprises embedding HTML links in the displayed message.

6. The method of claim 1 further comprising storing electronic messages between the parties as data records in a database.

7. The method of claim 6 further comprising making a subset of data records available to a party for viewing on web page displays.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein the web page display views are based on customizable templates, further comprising storing customized web page templates.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein the information augmentation comprises providing person-to-person contact.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein providing a person-to-person contact comprises providing an instant messaging session between the between the sender party and the recipient party in response to the latter's activation of the activation link in the displayed message.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein the sender party is associated with a first coverage team including at least the sender party, wherein the recipient party is associated with a second coverage team including at least the recipient party, and wherein the information augmentation comprises providing an instant messaging session between the first and second coverage teams in response to the latter's activation of the activation link in the displayed message.

12. The method of claim 10 wherein the instant messaging sessions involving a party are given names and the names are entered in a directory.

13. The method of claim 12 further comprising displaying the directory of names to the party, and embedding a user-selectable link leading to named instant messaging session in its displayed name.

14. The method of claim 1 wherein the information augmentation comprises an additional information file attached to the received message.

15. The method of claim 14 further comprising providing a tool to generate and attach an additional information file to the message.

16. The method of claim 14 wherein transmitting the electronic message to a recipient party for fixed format display comprises marking the message to indicate the presence of the attached additional information file.

17. The method of claim 14, wherein providing the information augmentation in response to activation of the link comprises displaying the attached additional information file as an HTML page.

18. A system for augmenting the information content of electronic messages between parties trading in financial instruments, wherein the electronic messages have restricted display size according to financial industry protocols, the method comprising:

means for receiving an electronic message from a sender party;

means for transmitting the electronic message to a recipient party for restricted size display according to financial industry protocols;

means for embedding an activation link in the restricted size display, wherein the activation link leads to an information augmentation; and

means for providing the information augmentation in response to activation of the link.

19. The system of claim 18 wherein means for transmitting messages further comprises means for adding time stamps and sender identification to the received messages.

20. The system of claim 18 wherein the means for receiving and the transmitting messages comprise means for displaying the messages on web pages accessible to the parties.

21. The system of claim 18 further comprising means for storing electronic messages between the parties as data records in a database.

22. The system of claim 21 further comprising means for making a subset of data records available to a party for viewing on web page displays.

23. The system of claim 22 wherein the web page display views are based on customizable templates, further comprising means for storing customized web page templates.

24. The system of claim 18 wherein the means for providing information augmentation comprises means for providing person-to-person contact.

25. The system of claim 18 wherein the means for providing the information augmentation comprises means for providing an instant messaging session between the sender party and the recipient party in response to the latter's activation of the activation link in the displayed message.

26. The system of claim 25 wherein the sender party is associated with a first coverage team including at least the sender party, wherein the recipient is associated with a second coverage team including at least the recipient party, and the means for providing the information augmentation comprises means for providing an instant messaging session between

the two coverage teams in response to the recipient party's activation of the activation link in the displayed message.

27. The system of claim 25 further comprising means for listing names of the instant messaging sessions involving a party in a directory.

28. The system of claim 27 further comprising means for displaying the directory listing of names to the party, and embedding a user-selectable link leading to named instant messaging session in its displayed directory name.

29. The system of claim 18 further comprising a tool to generate and attach an additional information file to a message.

30. The system of claim 29 wherein the means for transmitting the message to a recipient party for restricted size display comprises means for marking the message indicate the presence of the attached additional information file.

31. The system of claim 29, wherein the means for providing the information augmentation in response to activation of the link comprises means for displaying the attached addition information file as an HTML page.

32. A trading message platform for providing industry protocol-governed messages over a computer network, comprising:

a plurality of access devices coupled to the computer network, wherein each access device of the plurality of access devices is associated with a user of a plurality of users; and

a server coupled to the computer network, wherein the server is configured to process the messages sent and received amongst the users and to provide web pages from which a user may send a message, view a protocol-governed message display, and respond to a received message display, wherein the received message display includes a navigation link leading to additional information related to the protocol-governed message.

33. The trading message platform of claim 32 wherein the computer network is the Internet.

34. The trading message platform of claim 32 wherein the server is configured to time stamp and add sender identification to the messages sent and received amongst the users.

35. The trading message platform of claim 32 wherein the server is further configured to store the sent and received messages amongst the parties as data records in a database.

36. The trading message platform of claim 35 wherein the server is of further configured for making a subset of data records available to a user for viewing.

37. The trading message platform of claim 32 wherein the server is configured to set up an instant messaging between a sender and a recipient of a message when the latter activates the navigation link leading to additional information in the displayed message.

38. The trading message platform of claim 32, wherein the sender party is associated with a first coverage team including at least the sender party, wherein the recipient is associated with a second coverage team including at least the recipient party, and wherein the server is configured to set up an instant messaging session between the coverage teams associated with

the sender and the recipient when the latter activates the navigation link leading to additional information in the displayed message.

39. The trading message platform of claim 37 wherein the server is configured to list names of the instant messaging sessions involving a user in a directory.

40. The trading message platform of claim 39 wherein the server is further configured to display the list of names in a directory to the user and for embedding a user-selectable link leading to named instant messaging session in its displayed directory name.

41. The trading message platform of claim 32 further comprising a tool to generate and attach an additional information file to a message.

42. The trading message platform of claim 41 wherein the server is configured to mark the display of the message on the access devices to indicate the presence of the attached additional information file.

43. The trading message platform of claim 41 wherein the server is configured to display the additional information file as an HTML page in response to activation of the link leading to additional information.

44. The trading message platform of claim 32 further comprising a gateway for receiving messages from and sending messages to an external messaging service.

45. A format for an electronic trading message comprising:

a fixed number of alphanumeric data fields, wherein the number is fixed according to financial industry protocols;

an identification of a sender of the message; and

an activation link for an instant messaging session between a recipient of the message and the sender of the message.

46. The format of claim 45 wherein the message is an indication of interest message and wherein the financial industry protocols are the Financial Information Exchange protocols.

47. The format of claim 45 wherein the identification of the sender is linked to identifications of a coverage team associated with the sender, wherein the coverage team includes at least the sender, and wherein the activation link activates an instant messaging session between the recipient of the message and the coverage team.